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MMS - Just maybe talk about where you were born and your early life that way until you first started playing and your first influences, that way, what got you started?

AL - Well, actually, accordion, my Mom used to play accordion and concertina, so that's a big 120 bass accordion, a lot of times I couldn't see over the top of it, just behind it squeaking away. And then, I played that for a while and I could rattle off a couple tunes, you know and then my sister, Delores, well, she started playing it and after a while she got better than me. My first guitar was bought down in the old town, on the island. A guy named *George Mercredi* had an ordinary guitar so my Mom bought it for five bucks. So, she knew a couple of chords, so from there on I watched somebody else, you know, I was hunting around, see who plays guitar. I got onto that. I used to play lots for parties, even though I was just a young, little guy, you know, I'd rattle off a whole repertoire of songs.

MMS - How old would you have been then?

AL - I must have been 12, 14, that's the only time I remember I could handle the guitar and sing my own levels.

MMS - What years would those have been, Archie?

AL - Holy Jesus! '50s, '60s

MMS - Like early '50s?

AL - Yeah.

MMS - OK, your Mom was pretty instrumental as far as your musical influences that way.

AL - Yeah.

MMS - Radio was happening up then, did you have radio?

AL - In the early 50s, I think that's when the Army Signals had the radio. The main, the big tower now still standing at Ptarmigan (Mine) there, they used to have a watchman out there,

used to give out the weather and everything like that. And then they had, where now the “Tree of Peace” is now, that’s where CFYK, “Voice of the Golden North” was born. And after so many times, they had programs goin’ and then I got into it to do announcing, you know like, there was no special things to say but, you know, like, I would just. Sometimes I would get there at 5 o’clock and I would stay ‘til about 1 or 2 in the morning and then go home and have some sleep and go to work. I did that for quite a few years. I also have my badge, you get a badge from the organization.

MMS - CBC?

AL - No, it wasn’t CBC, no CBC.

MMS - There was no CBC?

AL - No, it was run by the Signals, the Army Signals.

MMS - The Army Signals, oh, OK.

AL - Their barracks are still downtown, just past, next door to the “Tree of Peace”. That long one.

MMS - That was a barracks? Oh, OK.

AL - Yup that’s where the army did their stuff.

MMS - So, when you were just starting to play around that time, where did the songs come from? You were playing traditional songs but what kind of songs were you playing?

AL - Those days, there was only records, eh? So, naturally Country Western was the big thing, so you didn’t get to hear a lot of jazz or stuff like that, or now, Rhumba and all that stuff.

MMS - Any of the big band stuff coming up like the *Tommy Dorsey* or the *Glen Miller* stuff?

AL - No.

MMS – No, It was all pretty well country.....

AL - Country Western, *Hank Snow*, *Wilf Carter*, the old guys you know.

MMS - So if that music wasn’t coming up on the Army Signals, it was coming up on records so, there was no road there was probably some air travel happening at that time, so, would people just sort of bring records up....

AL - Yup, well actually then, the CFYK, it became CFYK. They had transmissions, radio

transmissions. They had them on gigantic, great big records like this, eh? Transcribed stuff.

MMS - Holy smokes.

AL - You could play like about 5 hours or something on it or something.

MMS - So there would be music coming up on that.....

AL - They say like, there'd be little miniature plays and stuff like that or you know, singing, a whole bunch of stuff, you know. That was the filler. When I got off, I just switched it off to the station and there from Ptarmigan (Mine) they would cut into the air waves to get outside music and whatever it was going on, that's what was it.

MMS - Wow, so that music was coming from where? From southern Canada, from Edmonton, Vancouver, from the States?

AL - Probably way deeper than that.

MMS - So you were getting those early shows, say the "Grand Ole Opry" or anyone of those.....

AL - *Fibber McGee and Molly* and all those old stuff, classic.

MMS - So the popular radio, radio plays and music of the day, almost like the TV sitcoms of today, that's what they would carry. Wow, OK. So you would keep up on popular music just based on what was being brought in or transmitted. So you would sit down with your radio and your guitar and learn the songs?

AL - Well some of the songs already, like *Hank Snow* and them guys, *Wilf Carter*, some of the oldies, *The Osbornes'*, (*Osborne Brothers*) I forget his name now, they were very popular. I think just about then, that's when the Country Swing was in power, you know. So everywhere you went you could hear Country Western, everybody liked it because it was so simple, eh? So a lot of that was happening at that time. So, anyway, like on Saturdays, well I'll be there but probably 5, you know and I'd play right through 'til 6 in the morning.

MMS - This is at the radio station?

AL - Yeah, that's the one here at, downstairs at, which is now the Tree of Peace. That was the main station because it was run by... in fact, that's the government office and next door was the liquor store. It's the same road as where the police station which is now is the

MMS - The daycare there, that was the old RCMP station, yeah.

AL - That whole side from what used to be the Bay there, you know that whole thing used to be the Army complex.

MMS - So the Army was a...

AL - Provided all the radio stuff, you know...

MMS - and probably was a pretty economic, like I mean, they spent money in town, this is before the government even landed here. I mean the government didn't land here 'til '67, right?

AL - Well, the main government, yeah. In between there was land claim, land office

MMS - Federal government offices.

AL - That was the only thing. That was the only power here in town at that time. It was small.

MMS - Just sort of like the government agent, the rest of it was the mines and probably the army that was up here.

AL - Yeah, well actually, in those days there was 3 mines up here. Giant, Con and Negus. And part of Ptarmigan.

MMS - There was lots of gold being taken out of the ground up here for sure. So, there would be stuff coming in through the airwaves and whatever records. You had the old phonographs...

AL - 78's.

MMS - 78's, and so that's how you learned your songs and sort of would listen to those guitar players and pick up your stuff, your licks.

AL - I didn't have to many of those.....Just straight chords and hope my voice fitted in with it.

MMS - And as far as like, again this is sort of in that early time when you were just picking up the guitar, how many people would have been living here at that time?

AL - Well, mostly everything was in the old town, around the rock and on the island. So, I don't know, Giant mine, Con and Negus had all their little settlements, eh and well for sure every Friday night there used to be a dance down in the old town, just at the bottom of, between, what is on that side of the road there, coming down the hill (Bush Pilots monument), in front will be Weaver and Devote and just back in between there used to be a dance hall, the only one. So when Con, Giant or town people, well there was always a big fight, eh?

MMS - I bet, yeah. So Friday night was the night to party down that way? Fridays, was that a payday?

AL - Sometimes, like that, there was only one or two banks, the Toronto and the Imperial. The Imperial used to be right across from, what, the Wildcat Café. The other one was on top of the hill beside, right in front of the Legion.

MMS - OK, wow, you had all those places down there at that time? The Legion was here...

AL - Right across from it was "The Old Stope" which burned down in the early years.

MMS - Was there very many other people playing, like I mean there was other players at that time, do you remember their names or what kind of bands or what kind of music they played?

AL - Not electric thing, there would be a fiddle. Well, my Aunt played the fiddle, she used to play for the dances at the Legion along with *Betty Stevens*.

MMS - Your Aunt is that...

AL - *Flo*.

MMS - *Flo*, OK

AL - And *Fred Henne* ...

MMS - Yeah, he used to play the saxophone. I remember that, OK.

AL - what was the other guy's name, he had the rock shop in town, the first one. He used to be in the Yellowknife Inn then, right on the corner, he used to be. I'm trying to think of his name but it just slips right now..... Geez, anyway he was a drummer and he was a hell of a good drummer. And the piano player a lot of times when they played together Sax and all that there was another guy that used to fly for Ptarmigan (Airways) used to play the piano. Right now, Bill something, I forget his last name but they used to play around you know the Legion.

MMS - Where ever they had a piano.

AL - They would play at Con too because everyone was out there at the Con Rec Hall, there was a piano there. There was no Elks in those days. Nothing so just those two points and Giant would sometimes put on a hockey party or dance. Stuff like that. Other than that...

MMS - So did you get out to those when you were younger?

AL - No, the only one time I remember, *Fred (Henne)* give me a call and I was young, too young to be in the bar so every time they would finish a set, I had to go in the kitchen and sit there for a while, eh?

MMS - until everyone was ready to play.

AL - Occasionally I would sneak a beer, you know?

MMS - Oh yeah, for sure, so you were 14 or 15 then.....

AL - No 17, maybe not even that.

MMS - So you had been playing a few years by that time and knew the songs, I mean its.....

AL - The songs that I would pick I would know. Then there was, what the heck was it, a talent show, the first talent show. It was held in the old public school. And there I won first prize, for a week I had all my laundry done by the *Macara's*.

MMS - That was the prize? That's great!

AL - That was OK, look sharp.....

MMS - OK, so again, I just, I can remember back to when I started playing and I just sort of try and think of some of the things, just the influences of the time and where the music was coming from and... There must have been other guys playing guitars and stuff like that, did you get any lessons or anything or just sit down and jam with those guys other than playing in the band with them?

AL - Well, after a while I advanced from two chords to three..... So that kinda helped along the way because when you had to change, where the hell is it? So I used to sit there just about every day between all my homework and I would play.

MMS - Was there any music in your school? If you were going to school and stuff like that? Did you get a chance to play....

AL - The first damn school I went to was in school draw. It was grade one to twelve all jammed into 5 or 6 rooms there. So we had to walk, during the winter it was a bugger I tell ya. One time we, we used to follow the road, cat trains used to come in from Peace River and that, bring in all the lumber and all everything that you could think of. It was 50 some below, couldn't see a darn thing, we didn't know where...but we went right past, we were way out on the lake. Then some of the kids saw us, there was 4 or 5 of us I guess. Every morning well, we'll hook up with 2 or 3 others on the way, like *Macdonnell's* used to have their bakery in the old town and *Jimmy Anderson*, well, his Dad had the YK bakery, that was just down below the hill there, just past the theater so as we went along there would be 4 or 5 of us, every day we go together and walk together. And we'll sing these old marching songs, vigorous as all hell going down there. First thing I know, I guess we went right passed the god darned thing, the old school, some kids saw us, you now. Where are those guys? So they sent out a party. After, when the, well, you couldn't see a god darned thing in the fog, no wind, so everything... So finally they found us, so we had to come back. Well, everyday your lunch was frozen. Little tin boxes with rope around it, you go, eh? And good thing that you had a recess in the building, you know and thawed out

your sandwiches.

MMS - So you could actually eat them. So you were picking up like odd jobs and stuff like that after school?

AL - I used to work at the old town (Hudson) Bay. That was in the '50s or '58 or somewhere around there. In fact one of the guys that were looking at the old buildings trying to save it and they found my name on a post. A guy comes up and says, "you were working down here?" I said, "ya!" I forgot all about that, I had scribed my name on this post.

MMS - Put a date on it, yeah, right on.

AL - Well, I lived right on the island. First of all when I lived there, we're on the flats the first time. We lived right a couple doors down from the *Balsillie*'s. There it was the old town, then we moved to the island. The first house we stayed in was where the game warden is, used to be a log shack there. You see those old buildings now they tore them all down to put new stuff in, I mean time changes everything alright you can't stop it. If they put some thought into it, a lot of places, they say OK, we're gonna leave this section here, we'll move new one to hell and gone over there, you know.

MMS - Not a lot of foresight, like you say time changes everything, that's just the way that it goes.

AL - Well, like on the island, there was a few houses that were stationary. Everyone that was built on skids. If you didn't like your neighbor, you moved across, you got *Einar Broughton* to pull you across with his D2 cat.

MMS - That's a hell of a good idea, that's funny!

AL - Even in those days, you know people, families were between each other. That's why a lot of us you know, we thought Latham Island was heaven to me because that was a song that came from the Maritimes, "Prince Edward Island is Heaven to Me" So we kinda switched that around and put Latham Island in there.

MMS - So, at that time, mostly Metis people living here?

AL - It was a big mix.

MMS - I mean, the people coming in to work the mines, there was Europeans.....

AL - Oh man, well, the first big influx was the Norwegians, they were drifting around, eh and then the German, then the Italians and a lot of them are still here that started at the mines. Well, when one dies out, they move onto the next. Like Ptarmigan (mine) went out way before Negus (mine), Negus went down, well that was only Giant and Con and then Taurcanis up in the

barrens started up, then Discovery. Then there was a few others, you know like, behind Giant there, Tibbit Lake and all that where they had their little mines there too. For the longest time the only steel head frame was that one, you still can see it, if you're driving on the road. You come down from, say like, from Prelude. You come down that steep hill and you can see across the lake.

MMS - Yup, you can see that head frame.

AL - So I mean, a lot of that stuff there, everybody, you know like. Long time ago you never even locked you house, even up 'til the '70s. Well, when I worked at Giant, I would come home, like the other guys would be off before me, they'd go into my house, sit there have a beer and leave me a note.....

MMS - Different times, for sure. So those families, immigrant families moved from mine to mine as one closed, they would go to the next one. The families would probably just ended up staying here as the mines, the rest of the mines around closed and then there was just Con and Giant. Then they would just sort of stay here. Did they, do you remember any of them bring their music over, any of those players?

AL - Yeah, there was a lot of those. Fiddle was the next big... I think that started before the guitars did. But a lot of them played fiddle, men and women. So yeah they'd have a, any little old place they could have a square dance they would just give 'er. Then after a while, people would put on their own little, like a Friday night or something, people would go there, brought your goodies over and everybody sat around drinking home brew and stuff like that, just great, you know. Sometimes, I mean you get one person gets angry or something, you know and then they boot him out. "Come back tomorrow..."

MMS - Did the Old Stope ever have music in the Old Stope? Or was that just straight drinking and the music would just happen at house parties and the halls, the odd event in the hall?

AL - Like the Dance hall there the other people who would be playing the pianos and guitars and fiddles or accordion and every damn thing they could make noise with. Drums, well, that came later.

MMS - So did that happen every Friday?

AL - Friday, Saturday, yeah. The miners would all congregate and have a big fight.

MMS - Get drunk and have a fight...

AL - There was a lot of rivals between the mines and stuff like that. Even with hockey.

MMS - So there would be a hockey tournament and there would be, like a dance and stuff, right?

AL - They had their play-offs like they have now here in town. This used to be the greatest hockey town in the Territories mainly because maybe we had the arena.

MMS - Gerry Murphy. Where did you get strings? Guitar strings? Like. A music store, did you ask people going down south to grab you strings?

AL - There was no...Hudson Bay maybe.

MMS - They would order a set of strings for you or whatever?

AL - Well yeah, or you tried your damndest not to break your strings. Or you had to use rabbit snare.

MMS - Yeah, I was going to say some kind of snare wire or you would have to go out to the mines to find the right thickness. Jimmy rig it up and stuff like that.

AL - I never played really hard because I didn't have a pick, eh? Until the pick came along, well, that's when you started to break your strings.

MMS - Because you're hitting it too hard. So what kind of songs would you have been playing?

AL - Country and Western

MMS - Country and Western, give me some titles and some, like you say, *Hank Snow*...

AL - Well, *Hank Snow*, *Gene Autrey*, *Roy Rogers*, *Roy Acuff*, the old time, say like the *Sons of the Pioneers* were another one, the *Drifters*, all this stuff, you know.

MMS - *Hank Williams*?

AL - *Hank Williams* came in later, long after that.

MMS - Oh, is that right?

AL - Well, *Hank Snow* was another big name, everybody tried to emulate him.

MMS - He was Canadian as well?

AL - Yeah, he come from Nova Scotia. Bluegrass came in after that. For the longest time Bluegrass held its position along with the Country and Western.

MMS - When I play with some of the Metis guys and stuff like that, they have their fiddle tunes and stuff so would that have been another part of the repertoire there?

AL - A lot of them emulated *Don Messer and the Islanders*.

MMS - Of course, OK, of course.

AL - So that when he came on the scene that whole thing exploded, everybody was screeching along it.....

MMS - Yeah, 'cause it's, it's the different styles of music I guess that's what I'm sort of trying to figure out what you guys were playing back then. You have all of the different styles of music that are happening today. So you would have the Country and Western stuff and then there would be the Metis, would you call it, Metis, fiddle music. *Don Messer* and that stuff was really popular. Big band stuff never made it up here.

AL - I can't remember any... Well, the only one that you heard a big band would be the army, you know? The army bands.

MMS - So, the army bands came up?

AL - No, no, no.

MMS - You never had an army band up here.

AL - No, this was kind of early. You know, like, they would have on transcriptions especially, they'd have all this music, you know, backing up certain singers, you know. What the heck was... RCA/ Victory night, you know? So anyway, they got a whole bunch of this other stuff but I guess not everybody liked what was on it because it's just like even now, eh? Everybody has a preference to listen to whatever. All of a sudden it strikes you and then you're busy trying to get into the swing of things with it. And by that time too the guitar players and that started getting better and better and better so they're using all these different kind of chords, you know? Poor guy over here like me is trying to figure out, how the hell did he do that? So you had to improvise, take a shortcut.

MMS - Whatever works that way. So you were playing that stuff, I mean you were backing fiddlers and stuff when you were playing your guitar?

AL - Yup,

MMS - And whatever singers or country bands or dance things were going on?

AL - Well, on that little program I used to have guests come up.

MMS - Oh, OK. So were you playing on that show?

AL - Sometimes yeah but most of the time I was announcing. I'd say, "Well, today we have

Omer Bourque (SP?) and his brother” they would sing and play guitar, I’ll have my amp there sometimes and I’ll have *Mary Maleshko* come on, she (her) husband worked at Con.

MMS - And she sang?

AL - She played the fiddle, Ukranian style. Their real good reels, you know. So, I mean, between fiddle players, everybody had their own medium, how they changed things a little bit to make it sound better.

MMS - Their own style coming from their country. That’s why I was asking about the immigrants coming in and then bringing their music. You were getting a hit of that world music if you wanted to call it that, way back then.

AL - If they were doing something, they would do it in their own language. I mean, it’s easy to tap to but, you know, what the hell are they saying, they could have been running somebody down..... There was like, there was a lot of different ethnic people around but not one of them ever enforced, some of them didn’t even care, you know, ’cause they’re working, you know and the only thing you had at that time, there was no TV, was the radio. And then if the station didn’t switch it onto the main line, well, no radio. But the other people came in, you know like I remember *Chuck Vaydik* used to have, I think he called it “Something for Everybody”, or some darn thing. He used to play all kinds of music, Scottish, fiddle music, you know.

MMS - He did this on the station where you were working?

AL - Yeah.

MMS - Oh, OK.

AL - And then there used to be another guy too, used to come in. Coffee “Early morning Coffee” or something he used to call it. He used to bring in some certain people and they would sit there and jabber away, you know and tell something about Yellowknife or where you came from or whatever. So that was kind of a variety affair on the radio which was really good.

MMS - Did any of those shows ever get recorded or documented?

AL - No,

MMS - They just went live to air and that was it, gone.

AL - Who had recorders? You didn’t have that, the only recorder was in your mind.

MMS - That’s why I’m talking to you now, Archie. Like you say, it was a whole different time. If the radio wasn’t going, what did people do for entertainment? OK, well, they played hockey

and...?

AL - Well, there was no curling in those days for a long time, until the arena got built.

MMS - Con had a couple of sheets out there but I'm not sure when that got put on.

AL - And so did Giant. That was after the town, I think the center of town had one and then all of a sudden Giant had one and Con, the Rec Hall. That's where the bowling was, so that became another entertainment thing, bowling, curling. Others used to be a big challenge was cribbage, you know, everybody solid in that. There used to be some great rivals, *Danny Bagan* and all those guys. I felt pretty proud of myself when I beat him at the Elks tournament. I still got my trophy.

MMS - So, you were working at the Bay and learning how to play guitar.

AL - Yeah, well, after school, I used to work stocking shelves. Actually my boss was a cousin of mine, *Pat Balsille's* brother, *Tom*, he had the job down there so I got on after school. Saturdays, well, after I had finished all my work I would go over there, at home, and work there 'til 5 or close. Sundays was closed, everything was shut down, every damn thing.

MMS - You talk about your work at home, what kind of things were you responsible for at home?

AL - Well, I tell ya, I had to haul water, I had to chop the ice to get the water.

MMS - out of the lake...

AL - I had to buck, the Swede saw, cut wood, chop it, bring it all in and clean the garbage out. But sometimes, you know, I was trying to take a shortcut and not to do anything. I liked playing hockey. So one day, it was Saturday, boy and I was just ready to go and My Mom says, "Where you going?" I says I'm going to play hockey. She says, "oh no, you didn't do this, you didn't do that, you didn't clean out the little road to the.... She said, "you're not going." So I started thinking, you know. Well, I said, "give me a good licking", you know, so I can go." She said "no, that's too easy". I thought I could get a good licking' then I can bugger off and go, eh? That didn't work with her at all. So I suffered.

MMS - It just didn't work, eh? When were you doing the show for the army, was that sort of right after that time, your late teens, early twenties, something like that?

AL - Yeah, in fact the wachamacallit asked me to sign papers for CBC, said they were coming in. I should have. But then I spent so... Like, Fridays and Saturdays I used to spend all my time down there because I liked it all of a sudden it just, I didn't want to do any more of that, you know?

MMS - How long were you at the radio station?

AL - Let's see, probably 2 years maybe more. In those days I wasn't keeping track of nothing.

MMS - Probably pretty timeless up here. Nonetheless, a time when you were hearing gain these different music and whatever, interacting with the community that way and getting to meet people and getting to play on air and getting other musicians on there and you were getting a lot of music around you that way.

AL - Like, the 70's, early '80s, *Elvis Presley* was the big thing, so I saw him the one time in Edmonton, just the movie, eh, from Nashville where he was performing there, so I got some ideas there. So, I went to a party one time and tried it out, Rock and Roll? Holy Jesus! His movements and all, you know, I had to emulate him you know. There, that's where I bought a guitar from you know, like a shop.

MMS - A music store. So you bought an acoustic guitar or did you buy an electric?

AL - No, I bought a, well the other one wore out, eh? I think I fell on it, it was well worn out.

MMS - OK. Had its day...

AL - I tripped over this rock...

MMS - OK

AL - I was looking up in the sky.

MMS - Anyways, you had to buy a new guitar, eh? So you got a trip down south?

AL - No, where the heck. Wait a minute now, no, the second guitar, the electric one, my nephew's got it, a Fender. Well, actually when that happened, me and *Frenchy Cyrenne* drove out to Edmonton to go get some equipment. So, I bought a new guitar, electric one, small, little amp.

MMS - What kind of amp?

AL - Fender. That was just the right size for what we wanted. But the very first time when I actually played with another person, his named was *Frenchy Ganier*, a Frenchman from Montreal, Quebec. He played a lot of lead, really good stuff. So one night, I was at the party and we just got hooked in together. So then there used to be the "May Time Frollies" in the old "Capital Theater" and everybody, you know, there was a lot of dancing, singing and acting and music, you know, people playing piano or sax.

MMS - Like a variety show or something like that.

AL - Like a talent show, "Maytime Frolics". And, so we, they asked us to go up, you know, on this day here, Saturday or Friday night or some damn thing. So anyway, it was our turn us going on, we went out, we started playing and we stole the show. The only thing they weren't throwing was money, there was lots of that. Good recognition though you know and after that well, we played for quite a few years together in parties and that, you know. We played down at the old "Moulin Rouge" *Betty McMullen's* place. You remember that?

MMS - You called it the "Moulin Rouge"? Yellowknife had its own "Moulin Rouge"?

AL - You know where *Hodgson's* store or *Lafleur* used to have their shop there, that's where it was. Before that, it used to be *Hodgson's* Store. When old man *Hodgson* passed away, well, in fact, his main clerk was *Merv Hardy*. So, anyway, time passes, you know and it became *Betty McMullen* had that there. So we used to go down there, play there Friday nights.

MMS - So it was like a club or a bar?

AL - Well, it went all night and it was illegal.

MMS - That's alright, for sure. So it would go all night, so it was like a speakeasy or something like that, right?

AL - Yeah. Right, anybody came in. So we played there for I don't know how many months and one night there, I had this feeling, something was not quite right. So I told, well, we're tipping a few and there was a lot of people in there. So I said to... This would be about 1:30 in the morning, I said to *Bob (Ganier)*, I said, "let's get out of here." He said "no, no, no, everything's OK." I said come on, I said you want to stay, I'm going. Then he can't do nothing by himself. So finally, I convinced him we got out of there, in about 45 minutes later, there was a raid. They caught a lot of good findings boy, there. That's what they called them in those days, founded in, found in the premises.

MMS - OK, so it was like the more well known people in town?

AL - Oh yes, I'm not going to mention any names.

MMS - That's fine. So there was a lot of those people down there that time.

AL - Oh Yeah.

MMS - So what did they do, did they get charged or thrown in jail?

AL - No, no.

MMS - They just shut the place down.

AL - No, they said, OK, you guys, 'let's close the place down for the night'. Next night, they were there again.

MMS - "The Moulin Rouge".

AL - Yup, "The Moulin Rouge".

MMS - Oh, that's priceless, Archie, that's great! OK, so let's go back to *Elvis*.

AL - So anyway...

MMS - So you were playing with this guy from Quebec?

AL - Yup. So we were playing for different functions, you know, they would always come and ask us, if we're... like the Legion like I said, there was no Elks in those days. So, between the Legion and house parties, well, we got along pretty good. So that one time when I went out there I saw the gyrating, hip weaving *Elvis*, so I thought I may as well try some of that too 'cause nobody ever seen it over here. It went over, I guess.

MMS - I'm trying to put a time to everything Archie, if you can remember the year that would be great.

AL - Oh God.

MMS - Or close to.

AL - I'm not quite sure.

MMS - Maybe the mid '60s, mid to late '60s?

AL - Yeah, about that.

MMS - So you brought it back up to the party, what was like, the reaction?

AL - Well, thank goodness everyone was drunk. Including me.

MMS - So you just did it on your own or did you have some guys backing you up on stage?

AL - *Bob Gagnier* and I

MMS - So he was hip to that stuff?

AL - Well, he had to.

MMS - He probably would have really liked that if he was a lead player.

AL - Yeah, so anyway, after that we didn't play because he went back to Quebec for I don't know, maybe two years or so and then he came back. He started driving then for "Frame and Perkins". So that's when me and *Frenchy Cyrenne*, we played together for a while, maybe a couple of years. The bar which is called the neighborhood...its right across from the old Bay, remember?

MMS - The Gallery?

AL - The Gallery, that was not the Gallery then, it was something else. It was run by a German couple. The bar was on this side, The "Cockpit" or some damn thing and then this side here was the restaurant, so now things were changing. So they said well, of all things, a world famous stripper was supposed to come in on a Friday. So, the guy from, who was running the complex there, got a hold of us and he said can you guys come over I want to talk to you guys? People got a gig, eh? So, we go over there and start talking and he says, they were putting down a whole new floor section,

MMS - Dance floor

AL - Yeah, plywood and all that stuff because everything was all covered and that's like a good restaurant, eh? OK, so anyway, he says it's a stripper and of all people, *Little Egypt*. *Little Egypt* was famous, she was just a short little thing, her husband was like 6 foot something. So now, what the hell, we were trying all kinds of music, what the hell did this stripper go to, you know? So, she came in like, you know, Thursday or something, so we had a talk with her, "What do you uh...?" You know, she says, anything that's lively, you know. Oh boy. So anyway, come Friday, go in, the place is just jam packed. So, we started playing, we tried to play something different, something she could move to 'cause Country and Western didn't do it.

MMS - No.

AL - Waltzing....

MMS - with no clothes on...

AL - So anyway, we got through that. Yeah, Jesus, I was never so happy to get over that. God, we had to think what the hell can we play for this. There wasn't too many choices, either that or I had to make up something really fast. So it's good to be like, versatile.

MMS - Well, yeah, for sure.

AL - You can change moods in midstream.

MMS - Yeah, right away. That sounds like fun.

AL - So anyway, after a while we started playing down at the Elks. And we played a few times at the Legion.

MMS - So, just the two of you again?

AL - Just the two of us for the longest time and then we broke up. So he had his own band, he was starting his up. Then I joined 3 other guys, *Bill Smith*, he was from Edmonton, he played all "Ventures". The drummer was *Wayne* (?) from Winnipeg, me from Yellowknife, *Bill*, no...*Pete Graham* he was the piano player, he was from Toronto. He played a lot of that *Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins*.

MMS - Yeah, OK, yeah, yeah! Oh excellent! So you got lots of rock and roll, those guys could do all of that stuff.

AL - So then, we did "Ventures", so we had the name, Takkarass"

MMS - How did you get that name?

AL - That was some of the heading from the *Ventures*...

MMS - Like one of their tunes?

AL - The tunes, you know we just cut the first one off or use the last part and had another one from this and put it here so we came up with that idea. About that same time, *Frenchy* and them were going to start playing at Con. So, like, we practiced for 6 months, 4 hours a night, until we got everything just down. So we went to see the Elks, we have a new band. What do you guys play? Play Rock and Roll, anything. OK, what are you guys doing Friday night? Oh nothing, except practicing. Do you guys want to play? What's your guy's name, so they put it out there, they put it on the air. So now it was kind of like a battle of the bands

MMS - Between yourself and *Frenchy's* band

AL - Yeah. We played all instrumentals, just a few songs I done all the rest were instrumentals. The place was just jam packed, the Elks. *Frenchy* and them they sent down some spies. I could see one of the guys, *Bill* said, hey, there's our opposition, the place had a big note that said full house. Con I don't know how much we sent out one of our spies out there to find out how it was...He says there's barely anything out there, they're shutting down early. Yes Sir.

MMS - So you guys blew the roof off of that place that night I bet.

AL - Oh Yeah. Well, then every Friday and Saturday we were playing at the Elks then the Legion was trying to hook into us, we played down there a couple of times. In them days, I

mean Rock and Roll was pretty, starting to get solid but before that it was kind of a swing thing, like waltzes and stuff like that. So, the Legion, that's what they consist of.

MMS - It's an older crowd there too, right? At that time there was still probably a lot of veterans over there.

AL - So you had to play that kind of medium stuff, eh? We did that for a long time until we, well, let's see, we broke up after I don't know how many darn years we played together. It just so happened that me and *Frenchy* got back together again. In those days, the only Bass player was this great big thing, he came from Con, *Russ* something, I forget his name now. He was the only one that had the big bass, there was no electric bass. Anyway, so, we hooked in with these others and we played around there for a while. Then me and him used to play together down at the Elks, there was no electric, just acoustics. There was no stage then, so we used to sit right amongst the people, just a givin' 'er, no mics, no shit all.

MMS - Exactly. If you want to hear more, get closer. You're playing acoustically, you must have had some pretty good callouses on your fingers, from playing and stuff?

AL - I could slide all over the place and not even feel it!

MMS - Yeah, I bet, and singing too, you would have to sing pretty loud.

AL - Yeah well everybody was...

MMS - Everybody was quiet, everybody was listening and stuff?

AL - What are they doing? You know. So we used to go over there Friday nights or Saturday night and then if we weren't there we were down at the Legion or some other party or something, you know that little organization had, something going, so we would go.

MMS - So, just where ever they would let you play, that way. And you were getting paid from the Elks and the Legion?

AL - Yup, the other ones there were really good because we could drink all we wanted, so it was a lot of fun. It's a good advertisement for us. So anyway, time goes on and one day there, *Frenchy* phones me and says hey, there's this girl singer I met. He was driving cab then so he's at the airport to pick up this girl. She had a bass guitar and every damn thing and she sang good, *April (Mercredi.)* Who the heck was drumming for us now, I forget. (*Frank*) *Wouters* sometimes he would.

MMS - Ah, OK, that's right too.

AL - And (*Frank*) *Wouters*. *Ted Hartley* was another one, He had the first rock shop in town that used to be right on the corner of the hotel.

MMS - The Yellowknife Inn.

AL - He was with the army then that they were in here. *April*, she sang and played bass and then after a while we changed a different drummer, I forget who the heck the other guy was. Oh, a guy from Giant, just picked him up.

MMS - So there was different people coming up here and working and even *April* just getting off the plane with her bass and stuff and those guys from Toronto, so there was.....

AL - They worked at the mines, like all 3 or 4 of us all worked at the mines.

MMS - The road was in so you could drive in.

AL - Well, 1961 was the first time that, the first bus came over on the road, eh?

MMS - So that must have made a huge difference, just as far as the town changing?

AL - Yeah, oh yeah, well, that's a time new town was born.

MMS - So what kind of stuff were you doing with *April*?

AL - Country and Western.

MMS - OK

AL - Strictly Country and Western. Or sometimes, you know like, a proper song we learned it, she would sing it, you know because she was versatile and picked up right away. We went on for a few years, you know. Did a lot of gigs like New Years gigs at the Elks and stuff like that. And in between if there was anything function going on, you know, Friday nights, well we played. Oh, then she had to go back to Alberta or something, so there was kind of a little two guy again.

MMS - A duo.

AL - We had to let go of the drummer, he used to fall off the chair.

MMS - Drummers are like that.

AL - Too much pounding, eh.....yes sir.....

MMS - So just back to a duo. What other bands, when you and *Frenchy* got back together there must have been other bands and stuff at that time? What other bands were around?

AL - At that time we met up with *Roger Regier*, that'll be back in the '70's, I think. He came in from British Columbia. There we snagged... They used to have that Christmas Daddy show, so he sang there that night and was playing bass for this....I forget who the heck was all there. So we just asked him if he wanted to come and join us. Yeah, so we had three then and then we had a drummer that was from Giant mine.. Anyway, that's when we formed, a band, it wasn't, what the hell, we didn't have a name, we just played. Until, we got a hold of another drummer then there was *Frenchy (Cyrenne)* on lead guitar, a drummer, *Gary Duherst*, *Roger (Regier)* on bass and lead singer and I was somewhere in there. That's when we were called, we called ourselves "Northbound Freeway".

MMS - So that was where "Northbound Freeway" came from, that name. So you guys were the first?

AL - Yup, we had a hell of a good band too, good sounding band we just seemed to gel you know, sometimes you get so lucky like that. Often times you get somebody that's off into setting snares when he should be shooting over here. And it gets so, really, you know, like, they call tight.

MMS - When you were playing your music and after a certain point in time or something, I mean even the guys that came up here. Is it *Hank Smith*, that one guy, who came up? Those guys were professional musicians, right? I mean, they were making a living at their music and travelling around and stuff. Did you ever have any desire to follow that kind of a lifestyle?

AL - No not really, I mean like I traveled to Edmonton and seen other performers like *Johnny Cash* and stuff like that, *Carl Perkins* which is a cousin of whatchacallit there. So, I mean the Country and Western was the big thing then in those days. So, like, I knew all of *Hank Snow's* songs because he was a good guitar player himself, did all his own lyrics and every damn thing. He had a damn good band so I mean that's, that was the one to be like when you were growing up. Everybody in Yellowknife liked Country and Western, you know. And there was not a big, big influx of other big shows because nobody was kinda interested in that. Country and Western, the cowboy shows there at the place like in the old town would just be full because its Country and Western. But sooner or later, like everything else, time evolves and now there's a different plateau of interest, you know. The thing what I think what really got the teenagers into this was that Rock and Roll movie came on. There was like *Chubby Checker* and *The Beatles* in the early days and a lot of those blues guys, like *Carl Perkins*, *Charlie Osborne* all those guys. So pretty soon you're leaving a little of the rock behind as a marker, you can always go back to that. If you don't make it with this one here, you can always fall back on some of these when they get restarted again or rejuvenated or whatever it is. After that, well there was a lot of things like fashions. The big thing was in the beginning, was zoot suiter pants, you know with the zipper down below and 24 inch knee and black and pink was the go colors in them days, you know. So I mean there was fashion was starting to come and as soon as the north opened up to like a road or something and the planes would carry more stuff, you know. So I mean, that started another ball rolling again after the Country and Western. But like I say, Country and Western has always been there and always will be. Because you know like the blues, it's a bounce off from Country

and Western and then from there, Rock and Roll, semi Rock and Roll was there and pretty soon hard rock and all these, you know. So I mean time has changed everything. Just like us, we changed a lot from I remember what a long time ago was and what you remember a long time ago was like. Even a dress, you know, like, if a new pair of runners came in, everybody had to buy them. Even if they was out of season.

MMS - Snow on the ground. OK, so, you didn't want to sort of go out and do that whole touring lifestyle? Did you guys ever write your own music, like make up your own songs or was there anybody writing songs about the north? You talked about that one song where you changed the lyrics to "Latham Island is Heaven to me".

AL - "Latham Island is Heaven to me"? Actually that came from *Freddy Mercredi*. We used to, he used to do a lot of singing, I used to back him up a lot of times with guitars, eh? He would do a lot of singing, I would harmonize.

MMS - Make up lyrics?

AL - Yeah, just so we can get drunk, you know.....

MMS - Have a good time.

AL - We played for many a party I tell ya.

MMS - Recording? Did you guys ever, did you guys ever in "Northbound Freeway" or before ever get anything recorded?

AL - Yes, that was just me and *Frenchy Gagnier* and the guy named *George Schultz* was with CBC and he used to fool around with tapes and stuff like that so he asked us one time to, if we could do something. We did a few songs, you know, instrumentals, I forget now what the hell happened there, he sent it to Edmonton to get refined and then after that we never heard any more about it. That was just when CBC was starting to get established. Had to be in the '70s because the '80s already changed. That's where I was playing with that other band there, because "The Ventures" came in, they were a big hit, you know, People that I know, "The Ventures" was the band to listen to. If there a record or a tape, you know. Well, they were on records in the beginning.

MMS - When could you first buy records up here, was that *Harold Glick's* store?

AL - Yup. Right now I can't remember anybody, maybe the stores did.

MMS - Maybe the Bay had a record section. That's right, they probably would have too.

AL - And then as *Jack Glick*, well he owned the Gold Range, eh? Well, actually how the Gold Range evolved was that he had rooming house, rooms, lent rooms out and the post office was

there. Right where the original Gold Range is. Before they had a little miss fire there. So, as time went on, he moved everybody upstairs and the post office was put in the back alley where "Frame and Perkins" used to come along and pick up bags of mail and take it out to Giant because they had a post office out there at the rec hall. From then on, *Harold (Glick)* had his shop next to the Gold Range. First there was RCA had big record player and he started bringing in LPs, 33s and then after that was the round ones, 45s and then tapes after that and then, when that was then, they went into where now is...

MMS - the 50/50 mini mall, the flower shop right on the corner.

AL - Holy Smokers, you know, like, when they first came out, 8 tracks, \$45, so you had to save like hell to get one and I finally got one then you had to buy the damn player.

MMS - It's interesting how, again it's just all of the technologies in my time but in your time must have just been even that much more so. When you were playing in town quite a bit and then you started a family and you were still working a day job and stuff, how did you find balancing all of those things?

AL - Well, first of all I was driving for, well I drove a long time ago for Frenchy's Transport, eh? I used to pick up orders at Hudson Bay because that's where he used to do all the delivery from. Deliver case goods or food or whatever they had ordered. After that, I drove for Byers Transport and then I went to the mines. The last place was Giant mine. That's when I went on that long holiday, 3 and a half months. Staggered through the US and all over the damn place.

MMS - You probably worked three years to get that though.

AL - Oh God, well, you know the money was good too, and stuff in town were cheap. Like beer used to be 50 cents a bottle, look, what is it now for one if you go into the bar?

MMS - 5 bucks.

AL - Holy. You now I haven't been in the bars, you know for, the Gold Range for over 20 years. Legion, the Elks, I just quit going there, why should I you know? I can go to the liquor store and buy whatever I want and sit here and drink as much as I want. If there's any fights, it will be with myself. The other thing to, the comradery of people, eh? Everybody knew everybody. So, I mean everything just changed. So, you had no choice, like I mean, people had choices alright, everybody has. But sometimes other people fall into this really fast and establish themselves and then what you really believe in, you're standing over here still in the same spot but you haven't got what they got now, eh? But sooner or later they went broke too, so you're right back in the same old track where you started. In those days a lot of people made their own businesses, they looked after it really good, you know. It's like the *Bromley's* store.

MMS- For sure, even the *Glick's* for that matter. Family businesses and family based businesses. Sutherland's Drugs, they went in and stayed there, some of them still do there. But

then when really things started happening is when the first bus came over in 1961. The all-weather road they called it, that was the all-weather road alright. Holy smackers!

MMS - Didn't matter what weather it was, it was pretty rough.

AL - Rough is right.

MMS - So that was a big difference there?

AL - Then the big trucks started coming in and started bringing different kind of stuff and technology wise from... the only way that other people, some of them never went down to Edmonton, you know, they just stayed here in Yellowknife. So whatever was here was here but then the new things came in, they never seen it or experienced it or what the hell is it, you know?

MMS - Oh yeah. Even television coming in and...

AL - Oh yeah, *Glick* had the first one there, everybody used to stand outside his, too crowded, we're standing outside looking in, through the window.

MMS - The first black and white?

AL - Yeah, the first canned stuff, you know like, they had a company that came in from Calgary. They opened up their shop in the 390 taxi stand, there was a restaurant in there. But in that complex there where 3-9-0 had a little part on main street side, in between there was a restaurant and then the back part was open then. That's where they had the first TV station in town. Everything was black and white, but two weeks late. So when you watched the hockey game...

MMS - That's right, I remember that.

AL - They had a little studio in there. That's where I backed up a girl named *Angie*, she was singing songs

MMS - Oh wow, too much, and it got broadcast out. Oh wow, is that ever neat, I never knew about that at all. Getting back to your family and your music and your work and juggling all of that, I mean, The music, you didn't look on it as like a sense of livelihood, to make your living with your music that way, it was always a fun thing to do.

AL - Yeah, like I say, we used to get invitations from all over the place and we used to go and take time off work, good thing, you know like, at the mine there where I worked they knew me so, I was always steady. Only once I missed shift and if the guy didn't look in the thing there he wouldn't even have known that I was not there. Then he phoned me, eh? The shifter phones me and says, well, Arch, you just about got away with it. That was my first time that I ever missed a shift, at Giant anyway.

MMS - The time in which that was all happening for you, in the '60's probably, in the middle of it that way, the '60s and the '70s was a lot, a lot more of a simpler time, it was a much smaller town at that time. Just a different....

AL - Well, the atmosphere was friendly. Well, even you, you know like, when you were growing up here you knew just about everybody, you know? And as soon as a new person came in, not very often that you would find that the person who just came into town is a bank robber or he's just looking for work and just a common person like the rest of us. So he fits in right away, even the family. Because that was a big thing too long time ago you know, the gold mines and everybody was coming up here, you know, creepers, to see what the hell's going on up here. And some of the people who were city slickers just fell in love with it. Because it's like going back in time, which you were sittin' on. Well, you know, there were other mines that kept Yellowknife on its feet a bit. See like the one at "Discovery", they had to come into town to get provisions, you know and then back out there again, you now. Another one was "Taurcanis". There was a lot of mining people that were in town here and everybody was looking for gold, nobody was looking for diamonds, eh? Because the main part was gold.

MMS - At that time, maybe it wasn't that early, I was just wondering how much of the Afro American music that was starting to happen, say out of Motown or that music coming up from the states and the just the racial tensions that were happening in the states and stuff. Did any of that filter through up here?

AL - No, not until the movie came out. Well, the main ones was the *Beatles* 'cause I remember we had the matinee and all the kids were all in there and all these girls were screaming and yelling. God, I remember sitting there, what the hell is that all about?

MMS - You don't get it.

AL - Like when *The Beatles*, you know, they would show parts of their kinda mood music, you know, bands, you know, different... Like *Elvis* and all those would show parts of it here, you know, Country Western, Rock and Roll and Blues. A lot of down south music from the everglades or whatever in that region, the Mississippi, especially, they do a lot of blues down there. Of course then you get the National Broadcasting Corporation which is from the US, they would show different groups that are coming up into the music, changing the whole, trying to knock over the tradition of Cowboy music, you know. And then they would go into themes, you know for shows and stuff like that, eh? So there again that changed the few I guess, you know.

MMS - The record company going through its marketing campaign, probably early marketing campaign. You said the movie came up, so like it wasn't just one movie or are you talking like...?

AL - There was, say like a two hour movie, that's the longest anything can go, eh? OK, so during that time they would...

MMS - They would have a whole bunch of different bands...

AL - Yeah, different artists come on there like *Chubby Checker* when he first started, *Little Richard*. All those. Different segments of different band eras, you know?

MMS - So you'd go to the movie theatre here, the Capital Theater.

AL - That's where they showed it.

MMS - You'd go and catch it. What was the reaction like with everybody else in the theatre?

AL - There was a lot of screaming and yelling...

MMS - Is that right? So the girls were going crazy in the theatre up here.

AL - Yeah

MMS - That's funny.

AL - Us guys would just sit back, start laughing, Jesus Christ, what's this going on here, you know.

MMS - So, Beatlemania hit Yellowknife, even then. That's amazing. So, the movie theatres as well, you would be getting the *Elvis* films?

AL - Yeah, like you would get *Ventures*, you know. It showed 10 or 15 minutes of every band and then some of the themes from the bigger movies you know, that you see, you hear the music but you don't know who did it. Until the credits come up but who's watching for that, everybody rushes out to get the hell home. So you get that song in your mind and you wonder who the hell that band was and what's the name of it, you know. So you start rifling through it and finally find out who the hell it is. If whatchamacallhim, *Harold (Glick)* didn't have it, well, he would phone, he would send a letter to Edmonton I guess. That's the closest one to where ever to have anything, you know, that was near to Yellowknife, Hay River didn't have anything.

MMS - So, that's pretty well it. I mean we've sort of covered the changes with the road coming in and just the different things that changed the musical times while you were playing that way, movie theaters and being able to buy records and...

AL - Fashion. There as a time The Bay would get all their stuff, you know, Liz working upstairs there, well, Weaver was Weaver. They made their own money by supplying the bush pilots with whatever they needed, the prospectors mostly. You know, like I remember *Bruce (Weaver)*, him and his Dad used to be there and when you walked in there, it was kind of a different world, everything was all stacked and you could smell the leather. At that time they had coffee in those little, thin paper bags you know. So you walked in there you could smell the real store, eh? And

it was great! Well, between Hudson Bay and Weaver Devore and Hodgson's store that was the main ones. I remember *Merv Hardy* used to work down there in the store.

MMS - They named the ferry after him, right?

AL - Because he was into parliament after that and after a while his wife went into it after he passed away. *Merv Hardy* and his wife, *Tippy Hardy* she represented the north. She got in. But like, you know, like everything else that was a new thing too for women going into politics, eh? And so, I guess it was kinda hard to convince them other hard heads that this way, the newer evolution should be starting, that's ain't because of Yellowknife being the point or anything but just trying to represent the NWT, that we are just as bright as the people from the other provinces. Because for the longest time, you know, who the hell wants to come up north, for a long time until we got well known. And then there was so much people here. Holy Mackerel. There were lots of people like different ethnics', eh? That's one thing you know like Yellowknife doesn't do is a lot of this stuff because maybe too much modern people, you know, they forget about what it all came from eh, Yellowknife. 'Cause a long time ago there used to be one hell of a good parade, July 1st, Christ, it would last for an hour or maybe more. Now, 22 minutes or so and it's all over. What do you do with the rest of the day? See they used to have midways and all that, eh?. Little place where you throw a ring and try and capture something that's on the little thing there, you know. Ball pitching, all kinds of stuff, sack races, all kinds of stuff, tug of wars. Used to have on Frame Lake, man of war, people in canoes with boxing glove or a big sack on the end there, stuffed so you don't hurt each other and try and knock each other off the boat. Used to have all that kind of stuff, eh? Boat racing, none of that anymore. Nothing hardly any for the kids. July is? Big deal, wave at the flag, its paper, leave it outside boy and it's gone. The best one, one time was when the government spent \$30,000 or something on fireworks in July. Poof! Didn't see shit 'cause there was too much light. I had some good times, had to.